

# Steal This Hook! "Please Help Me"

By Robert Wiese



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This month, [Complete Champion](#) hits the shelves and gives you a lot of fun information about playing heroic championlike characters, along with a boatload of new feats and prestige classes. Champions always need things to do, and most of a champion's quests fall into one of two main categories: defeat evil and help innocents. We'll leave the direct hooks to evil until later, and focus on the innocents. This month, three different kinds of innocents in trouble seek champions to help them. Bring them into your campaign today to see what your players' heroes are made of.

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## Sob Story -- *Forgotten Realms*

Traveling in the Ride is dangerous, but the barbarian nomads can be avoided if one stays on the road between Ilenvur and the Citadel of the Raven. The PCs are on that road, for whatever reason, when someone sees a body lying in the cold plains north of the road. The body is that of a halfling bard named Chanker (for short), and he is almost dead from starvation, thirst, and exposure. His clothes are tattered so badly that they barely stay on his small body. If revived, he looks with startled wonder at the PCs, thanks the gods, and then begins this tale in a sad and low voice.



"I am the only one to escape. My friends and comrades are all . . . I don't know anymore. Eight of us set out for the Great Glacier and crossed a portion of the Tortured Lands. We chose that route for directness and because the Tortured Land is unpopulated. Two days in, we found a fortress rising from the volcanic plains. Being adventurers, we went to investigate, but before we had even entered we blacked out and awoke in cells. A tall genie with red skin told us we were his slaves and set us to work, but we knew he was trying to fool our minds somehow. It turns out that everyone succumbed but me. I pretended, instead, and bided my time. My companions accepted their lot. Finally, after months, I escaped through a drainage hole and made my way across the Tortured Lands, and then into the barbarian lands we now occupy. By the time I had come halfway across the steppes, I was feverish and delirious due to lack of sustenance. Finally, I could go no farther, and I thought I would die in these harsh lands. Praise Yondalla that you have found me."

Chankar begs the PCs to go back with him, face the genie, and free his friends. He is worried that they might already be dead because of his own escape. He offers all their gear in payment for their lives -- gear now held by the genie.

### **d100 Motivations**

01-60 Chankar is on the up-and-up.

61-75 Chankar is a demon servant of the slavemaster and was put here specifically to lure the PCs to the fortress because they are carrying something the slavemaster wants.

76-85 Chankar is making up the whole tale because he is afraid the PCs will kill him. He plans to lead them north a few days and then disappear on them. There really is a fortress, even though Chankar's companions are not there (since he didn't have any).

86-00 Chankar is a friend or relative of one of the PCs, and he tells them the truth even though he was supposed to lie to them to lure them to the fortress for reasons of greed. He hopes the PCs can slay the slavemaster and free his friends, who serve as insurance that Chankar behaves when away from the fortress.

### **d100 Complications**

00-25 The slavemaster isn't a genie; it's a demon that a wizard trapped on this plane. The demon slew the wizard and then moved the wizard's fortress to the Tortured Land to be out of the public eye while it gained strength and power.

26-45 The other adventurers have become willing slaves of the genie (or demon), and they don't want to be freed. They won't report the PCs' presence, but they resist being carried away from the fortress. This could be the result of charm magic or simply their own choice to be enslaved.

46-70 The Tortured Land is home to more than just this fortress. Its cold, sculpted plains are home to a few monsters that have wandered down from the Great Glacier, including ice worms and remorhazes.

71-00 The fortress is gone when the PCs reach the site. The slavemaster moved the whole thing a few miles farther into the Tortured Land because the halfling escaped, and the PCs have to decide if they believe the fortress existed and then figure out where it is. The slavemaster erased signs of its existence, which means the PCs have some intense searching to do to discover them.

### **Campaign Adaptation**

Here are some suggestions for other campaign worlds. If you play this in a cold area, [Frostburn](#) may help, and if you use demons then *Fiendish Codex I* would be useful. If you stick with genies, then the core books should do it for you.

**Eberron** -- Finding Chankar in the Eldeen Reaches, and placing the fortress in the Demon Wastes, would work very well for this adventure.

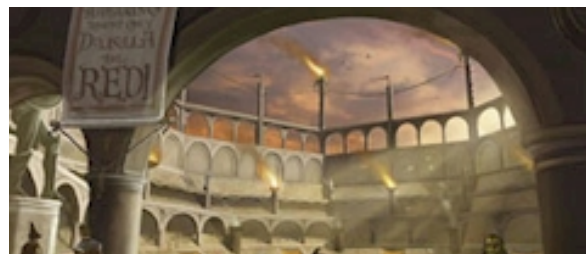
**Generic** -- The fortress needs a remote place, though it doesn't have to be inhospitable. Remember that Chankar can only get so far before dying, so don't put it in too remote a spot.

**Greyhawk** -- You could place the fortress at the edge of the Sea of Dust, and Chankar on the other side of the Hellfurnaces after a truly miraculous journey on which he found some hallucinogenic food sources that helped him survive.

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### **"Fight My Battle" -- Eberron**

Droaam is a dangerous place for anyone not of a monstrous race or of monstrous descent. The land is crawling with ogres, medusas, gnolls, hags and whatever else, and the humanoids that make up the populations of other nations are viewed with



some distrust. The weight of the law, such as it is, falls more heavily upon humanoids there, just as it falls more heavily on the monsters in other lands.



The Great Crag is the capitol of this land, and it serves as the home of the hags called the Daughters of Sora Kell. Trolls and ogres keep the laws that these hags hand down, usually with a lot of force and an excess of enjoyment. Prisoners are sometimes sent to the gladiatorial arena for a one-time chance to win their freedom. Usually they don't, because the gladiators are fierce and well trained. When the hags are feeling unusually cruel, a victim might be offered several chances to win his (or her) freedom, suffering successive resurrections to fight over and over again.

The PCs, visiting the Great Crag for some reason, are walking down the street when they see a thin and scrawny half-elf on a corner trying to talk to passers-by. Most ignore him, since he is chained between two trolls who look intimidating. "Please, I am innocent! Is there no one who will stand for me?" This half-elf has been accused of a great crime, and instead of a trial he has been sent to the arena to fight for his life. He is obviously unfit for this, so the magistrates have allowed him to find someone to fight in his place. The fighter will not suffer the punishments for the crime, except death if he or she cannot win in the arena. All that the probably-doomed man can offer is his gratitude.

Note: This one might be a tough sell to any but obvious do-gooders, so don't try too hard (or don't use it at all if they just won't go for it).

### d100 Motivations

00-60 The half-elf, Ismorath, is innocent of the crime but cannot prove it. Since justice against humans and elves works a little backwardly here, this is his only chance to "prove his innocence." Basically, if he puts on a good show and wins, the magistrates don't care if he did it or not and will release him.

61-70 The half-elf was set up by someone associated with the gladiatorial arena, solely for the purpose of getting more people to fight there. The half-elf is also not the first person so set up, just the first allowed to find a surrogate.

71-00 The half-elf knows that the trolls plan to release him and hold whoever agrees to fight in his place responsible for the crime (that's justice in Droaam), but he is cowardly and tries to recruit a PC anyway.

### d100 Complications

00-45 The half-elf is a scapegoat, who is being punished so that everyone forgets the crime. Whether the PC wins or loses is immaterial (except perhaps to the PC). However, following up on the crime could lead to a more interesting adventure full of dark haggish intrigue.

### Campaign Adaptation

This hook has specifics about it that might make it unsuitable for some campaign worlds. If you can use it, then you might find [Complete Warrior](#) useful for making gladiators, and the various *Monster Manuals* useful for making monstrous ones. Remember to use spiked chains and nets. Watch *Gladiator* with Russell Crowe to get the feel of the arena.

**Forgotten Realms:** This adventure is well suited for Hillsfar, on the Moonsea, though you should consider changing the monstrous gladiators to humanoid ones.

**Generic:** If you have a place in your campaign world that has gladiatorial fights, you're set. If not, make one or skip this hook.

**Greyhawk:** This kind of thing happens in lands of the former Great Kingdom of Ahlissa, so the Eastern Kingdom works for this adventure.

46-80 The master of the arena has been known to cheat on occasion, and he will make something turn out the way it's "supposed to." Actions might include releasing extra monsters if the PC is doing well, using better gladiators posing as worse ones, and slipping the PC faulty equipment.

81-00 Within the gladiators, there are factions and alliances. The PC perhaps has to navigate a gladiatorial uprising (a la *Gladiator*) while discharging his or her mission.

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## Rustlers -- *Greyhawk*

The Theocracy of the Pale is in the cold northwest part of the Flanaess. Priests of Pholtus rule the land -- a land of great rural stretches -- with their unwavering philosophies. The Rakers Mountains bound the country on the east, and the Phostwood bounds it on the west. Within this land, people live simply and work hard to make good lives.



The PCs are traveling in the eastern part of the country, from Rakervale south to Ogburg, when they find some giant-sized tracks crossing the road and heading eastward. A tracker can determine that they were hill giants, that there were about eight of them, and that they seemed to be carrying something heavy. The tracks lead east into the Rakers. Following them westward, the PCs arrive in a farming and ranching community where they learn that a number of cattle are missing. No one saw what happened to them, and though people have seen the large tracks, they don't know what the tracks belong to. This is the second time in a month that cattle have disappeared. The first was three weeks ago and the community concluded that it was a one-time theft. But they were wrong. The people here don't have the skills or courage to track the giants, and they beg the PCs in the name of Pholtus to help them. They have little to offer, but suggest that the giants must have collected some valuables.

### d100 Motivations

00-75 Real giants are stealing real cows, and real ranchers are very scared. No one expects their cows back.

76-85 The giants are paid by an agent of Iuz to stir up trouble on the eastern side of the country. This agent has a contact in the village that is providing key information, but he does not know that he is allied with evil or helping the rustling giants.

86-00 One of the farmers is stealing cattle from the others and selling it far away. To cover the crime, he or she is faking the giant



footprints. (Adjust the complications below as needed.)

## d100 Complications

00-25 The giants are stealing cattle not for themselves but for a white dragon that they are enslaved to.

26-70 The giants are stealing the cattle for themselves, but have never gotten any to their village. Both raiding parties have gone missing, eaten by a dangerous mountain predator such as a remorhaz or a purple worm.

71-75 The giants are not working alone; they are being used by agents of luz to draw attention to the eastern areas. Humans and other creatures of evil (perhaps even a demon) can be found among the giant encampment.

76-00 The giants have laid some traps along the path to their camp, in case they are pursued. These include deadfalls, rock avalanches, and falling log traps.

## About the Author

**Robert Wiese** has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and year-old son Owen.

## Campaign Adaptation

Giants love cattle in any campaign world. In the absence of a book on giants, use the class books to make beefed up giants with barbarian or scout levels, and add some giant clerics and sorcerers.

**Eberron:** Droaam could be the home of this adventure or, better yet, the areas of Breland adjacent to the Droaam border.

**Forgotten Realms:** In the Shaar, tribes of humans herd superior horses, and giants live in the nearby hills and mountains, so this is a good location for the adventure if you can get your PCs down there.

**Generic:** You need some ranches, some nearby mountains where evil giants live, and whatever else you want to complicate the plot with. You don't even need a city nearby.

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